



## Early Learning Performance Funding Project

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### OF INTEREST TO

The Office of Early Learning (OEL, the Office), Early Learning Coalitions (ELCs, Coalitions), and School Readiness Providers.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this program guidance is to provide information and guidance on the Early Learning Performance Funding Project Program (ELPFP) requirements.

### AUTHORITY

[Chapter 2018-9, Laws of Florida, Specific Appropriation 84](#), which states in part:

From the funds in Specific Appropriation 84, \$3,500,000 in recurring funds and \$12,000,000 in nonrecurring funds from the Child Care and Development Block Grant Trust Fund are provided for Early Learning Performance Based Incentives to be allocated based on a methodology approved by the Office of Early Learning to award child care providers and instructors for improving school readiness program outcomes. The funds will be administered by the Office of Early Learning in coordination with the early learning coalitions to provide consistent standards and leverage community efforts to support a coordinated statewide system of quality.

### REFERENCES

Early Learning Grant Agreement between OEL and the ELC

[Statewide School Readiness Provider Contract \(Form OEL-SR20\)](#), herein referred to as “SR Contract”

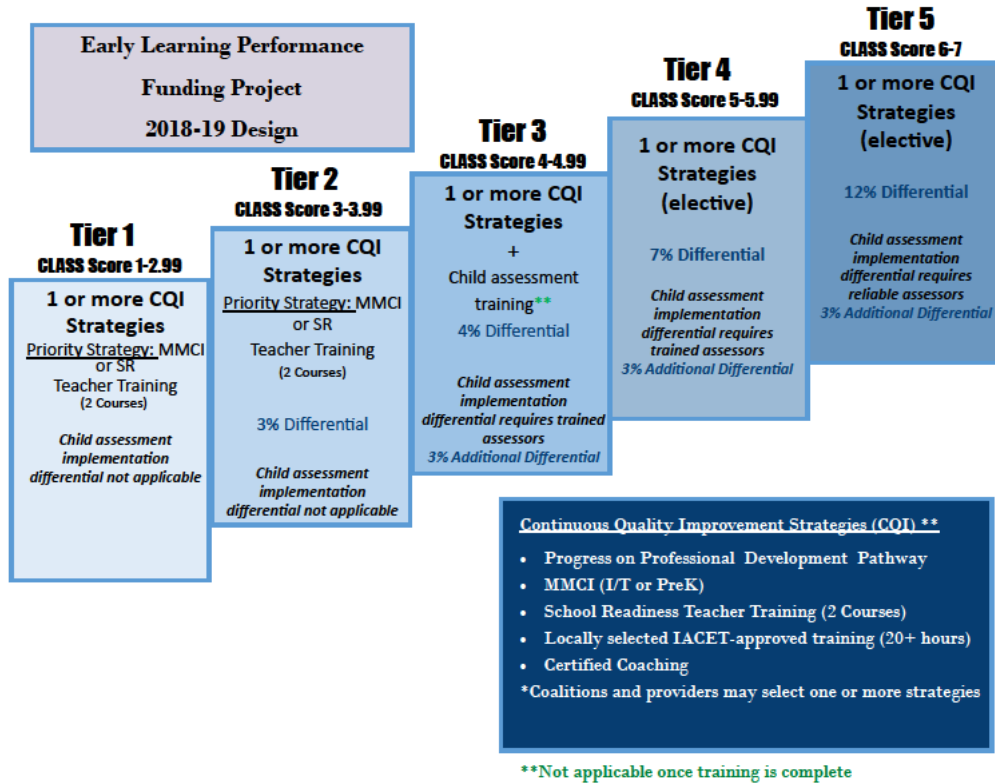
### BACKGROUND

First authorized by the Florida Legislature as a pilot project in 2014, the Early Learning Performance Funding Project (ELPFP) is an initiative to reward School Readiness (SR) providers for demonstrating high levels of quality, to increase teacher knowledge and change teacher behavior in the classroom that directly impacts children. Pursuant to legislative authority, the Office develops a timeline for implementation of ELPFP, including project design, budgeting, communications, application process, provider selections, contract development and execution, quality supports, contract and project management, and payments.

The project utilizes the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS<sup>®</sup>, CLASS), an observation-based program assessment from Teachstone Training LLC, to measure teacher-child interactions that are predictive of child outcomes.

CLASS includes classroom observations at different age levels (infant, toddler and pre-k) and methods for teaching practitioners how to provide high quality interactions in order to improve child outcomes. More information about research on the CLASS system is located at <http://teachstone.com/resources/research/>.

Research conducted by the University of Florida’s Lastinger Center indicates a number of benefits to providers that participate in the ELPFP including improved teacher knowledge, implementation of effective teaching practices, improved teacher child interactions and an improved classroom climate all leading to a higher standard of care for children.



## DEFINITIONS

**Active** – Participating status indicator in the ELPFP system for ELPFP providers, instructors/directors and classrooms determined to be participating.

### Application Statuses

- **Not Reviewed** – These applications are awaiting coalition review.
- **Potentially Eligible** – Coalition believes these providers should participate in the program, and would like pre-observations completed. The ELPFP system sends application details about potentially eligible providers directly to WELS for use during CLASS observations.
- **Potentially Eligible** – Alternate: Coalition believes these providers are eligible to participate in the program, but do not have room for the provider at this time. These providers will serve as backups to providers that were labeled potentially eligible, in the event that they do not execute a contract with originally selected providers
- **Not Eligible** – Either the ELC or ELPFP system determined the provider was not eligible for participation in the program based on the provider’s application.
- **Not Selected** – Coalition decided that the provider should not participate in the program or there were enough potentially eligible and potentially eligible – alternate providers to meet current funding and capacity.

**Benchmark** – Measurement used to establish project progress made up of deliverables, responsible party and due dates for each.

**Certified coaching** – Coaching provided to participating instructors/directors by certified coaches.

**Child Assessment** – One of the OEL-approved research-based child assessments that provides a comprehensive, age-appropriate assessment aligned with the State’s early learning standards. Approved child assessments include Teaching Strategies Gold, Assessment Technology, Incorporated - Galileo and High Scope’s Child Observation Record (COR).

**Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®, CLASS)** – An observation-based program assessment instrument and associated system of learning, measuring and improving that measures teacher-child interactions. CLASS is a registered trademark of Teachstone Training LLC.

**Classroom Care Level** – The following table defines each EFS and CLASS care level:

EFS Care Level	CLASS
Infant	Infant 0-18 months
1-Year-Olds	Toddler > 18 months to 36 months
2-Year-Olds	
3-Year-Olds	Pre-k > 36 months – 72 months
Pre-K	

**Classroom List** – List of active or inactive classrooms found in the ELPPF System that are or were eligible for participation and have, at one point during the project term, participated in the project.

**CLASS Observation** – Observational assessment performed in a classroom by a Teachstone-certified observer that measures teacher-child interactions.

**CLASS Observation Contractor** – Entity under contract with OEL to coordinate and conduct CLASS observations.

**Composite CLASS score** – A score determined by averaging 50% of CLASS observations by CLASS care level at a participating provider including each CLASS dimension except Negative Climate.

**Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)** – A process to ensure that early learning programs are systematically and intentionally improving quality services and increasing positive outcomes for the children/families they serve.

**Early Learning Performance Funding Project (ELPPF; project)** – Legislative initiative funded from the Child Care and Development Block Grant Trust Fund provided for Early Learning Performance Based Incentives to be allocated based on a methodology approved by OEL to award child care providers and instructors for improving school readiness program outcomes. The Office of Early Learning administers the funds in coordination with the early learning coalitions to provide consistent standards and leverage community efforts to support a coordinated statewide system of quality.

**ELPPF System** – Web-based application used by OEL, ELCs, and participating ELPPF Providers submitting and verifying deliverables required under the terms and conditions of the ELPPF Contract and the Grant Agreement. See <http://earlylearningpfp.fldoe.org>.

**High-needs provider status** – Participating provider status located in a census tract where forty percent of the children under age 6 in the area are below 150 percent of the poverty level.

**Inactive** – Non-participating status indicator in the ELFPF system for ELFPF providers, classrooms or instructors/directors that the coalition has determined are no longer eligible to participate in the project. Providers that are not current with project benchmarks and deliverables are not considered participating providers and are not eligible for payment by the ELC under the terms and conditions of the Contract unless excused in writing by the ELC due to extenuating circumstances, at the sole discretion of the ELC or OEL.

**Instructor/Director Roster** – List of instructors/directors, their credentials and training entered into the ELFPF System by a participating provider using a Web-based form application.

**Introduction to the CLASS** – A two-hour online, interactive self-study program that provides participants an overview of the CLASS Domains and Dimensions.

**Making the Most of Classroom Interactions© (MMCI)** – Twenty (Pre-k) or Twenty-four (Infant/Toddler) hours of instruction provided to a participant by a Teachstone certified MMCI specialist plus an additional 10 (Pre-k) or 12 (Infant/Toddler) hours of self-study. MMCI training teaches participants how to define and identify teacher-child interactions as the CLASS observation instrument describes. MMCI is a training component of CLASS by Teachstone. MMCI training teaches participants how to define and identify teacher-child interactions described in the CLASS instrument.

**MMCI Participant Kit** – A training package required for ELFPF MMCI participants that includes training and materials supporting effective interactions in real classrooms and how to interact intentionally to increase children’s learning. MMCI Participant Kits include 20 (Pre-K) or 24 (Infant/Toddler) hours of MMCI training, a MMCI Participant Guide, a CLASS Dimensions Guide, a CLASS Video Library from Teachstone. The video library provides opportunities to view many examples of effective teacher-child interactions. OEL has established a state negotiated rate for the purchase of MMCI kits by ELFPF instructors/directors.

**OEL-contracted evaluator (evaluation contractor)** – An independent research entity under contract with OEL to design the research plan, compile results and report those results to OEL.

**Opted-Out** - Status indicator in the ELFPF system for ELFPF providers who decide to end their participation in the program prior to the contract end date.

**Participating classroom** – An infant-through-pre-k classroom at a participating provider where instruction is provided by a participating instructor/director.

**Participating instructor/director** – The director of the provider and the instructor for each infant through pre-k classroom.

**Participation Tier** – An assigned status of a participating ELFPF Provider from one through five based on the Provider’s composite CLASS score. Tier status determines a participating provider’s required and available optional strategies and the additional payment differential earned by participating providers in compliance.

**Participating provider** – Status of Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, Tier 4 and Tier 5 providers under contract with the ELC for ELFPF services and determined by the ELC to be current with all project benchmarks and deliverables.

**School Readiness Child (SR Child)** – A child receiving SR services while attending a childcare provider under contract with the State to provide SR services.

**School Readiness Teacher Training (SR Teacher Training)** – training on a variety of early childhood topics offered by a contracted training agency.

**Selected** – Status of an ELPPF applicant who is eligible for participation and has been selected by the ELC to participate in the project.

**Selection Statuses** (refer to Score Review tab in ELPPF system)

**Pending Score** – Coalition must wait for composite score and reimbursement level from WELS before determining if the provider should receive a contract.

**Pending Review** – Scores have been received from WELS and the Contracts are awaiting coalition review.

**Reevaluation** – Coalition believes there is an issue with the composite score from WELS, and determines that a reevaluation of the score is required within the WELS system.

**Selected** – Coalition has chosen the provider to participate in the program, and plans to enter into a contract with the provider.

**Not Selected** – Coalition reviewed scores from WELS, and determined that the provider should not participate in the program.

**Statewide Professional Development Registry (Registry)** – The information technology solution integrating the Florida Career Pathway that tracks and supports competency-based career development.

**Teachstone Training, LLC (Teachstone)** – Early education company founded by CLASS authors Robert C. Pianta and Bridget K. Hamre that provides training and supports for the CLASS.

**WELS** – The Web-based Early Learning System that serves as the early learning classroom support system where CLASS observers upload CLASS observation data, create Quality Improvement Plans and document Technical Assistance visits related to improving CLASS scores.

## GUIDANCE

### Application Process

Providers interested in participating in ELPPF complete an online application through the OEL portal in the ELPPF system, a web-based database maintained by OEL that captures and stores ELPPF-related information, found here: <http://earlylearninggfp.fldoe.org/Home/Welcome>. OEL makes the application web link available to providers and ELCs each year in the spring once the system has been configured for the upcoming year and is ready for use.

Attachment 1 – ELPPF Application Guide contains detailed information on the application process.

### Provider Selection and Budget Process

Coalitions select participating providers in their service area based on prerequisite qualifications, selection points, coalition's capacity to provide the available quality supports, and available budget using the ELPPF Provider Selection and Budget Worksheet provided by OEL, available on SharePoint [Coalitions Zone > Finance Administration & Budget Services > ELPPF](#) that includes:

- Instructions
- Provider Selection Point Scoring System
- Potentially eligible applicants from the ELPPF system
- Initial ELC ELPPF budget for providers and ELC quality support and project management

Attachment 2 – ELPPF Provider Selection and Budget Guide contains detailed information on the provider selection and budget process.

### **Contracts and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Strategies**

Providers selected to participate enter into an ELPFP provider contract with the ELC. This contract designates the provider's tier and compensation rates based on its composite CLASS score. Each tier of proficiency has different support strategies designed to improve the quality of services provided to the children in care, such as, professional development/training opportunities, professional development plan implementation, and child assessment training and/or implementation of child assessments. In addition, providers may elect to receive technical assistance and coaching to help them realize their goals for a high quality learning experience for young children. Composite CLASS scores and differential rates are correlated.

Attachment 3 – Contract Guide contains detailed information for developing, selecting appropriate continuous quality improvement (CQI) strategies, executing, and managing the ELPFP Provider Contract.

### **Notifications and Communications**

Each program year, contingent upon legislative appropriation, the Office notifies Coalitions and SR Providers about ELPFP via email and webinar. The Office establishes a timeframe for notifications, including but not limited to:

- ELPFP invitations – OEL sends email notifications of project availability to SR Providers, inviting providers to apply for the ELPFP for the upcoming program year. This notification contains the application period open and close dates.
- Informational webinars – OEL conducts information webinars with Coalitions and early leaning providers to share the project design.
- Training webinars for ELCs – OEL conducts informational webinars for ELCs, as needed, to provide training on topics such as contract execution period, project start, benchmark periods, project end, contract management, invoices, and reporting/data.

Attachment 4 – ELPFP Notifications and Dates Table contains specific events and dates for the current program year.

### **FUNDING**

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Trust Fund funds the ELPFP, contingent upon legislative appropriation. Notices of Award (NOA) issued by the Office to the ELC provide a funding allocation for ELPFP pursuant to the early learning grant agreement between the Office and the ELC.

The ELPFP NOA contains funding for ELPFP Provider Payments as well as ELC Quality Supports and Project Management costs. The NOA contains a specified maximum for ELC Quality Supports and Project Management within the Targeted Funds and Restrictions section; OEL established the funding level for this purpose based on the total number of providers selected and tier assignments.

OEL Program Guidance 250.01 – Other Cost Accumulators (OCAs) includes ELPFP OCAs that define allowable activities for ELC Quality Supports and Project Management costs as well as ELPFP Provider Payments.

### **ELC Invoicing requirements**

The ELC must submit monthly ELPFP invoices to OEL in accordance with OEL Program Guidance 240.06 – Invoice Requirements. Invoices are due no later than the 25th calendar day of the month for expenditures from the previous month. Supporting documentation for invoices includes, but is not limited to by the ELC general ledger and EFS Final 5045 report. Pursuant to reporting requirements established with the early learning grant agreement, ELCs must comply with ad hoc data requests by OEL as part of the invoice support desk review process.

The early learning grant agreement and OEL Program Guidance 240.01 – Cash Management allow the ELCs to request an advance based on immediate cash need for the current business cycle. Any advance requests and monthly reconciliation of advances must follow the request format specified within OEL Program Guidance 240.06 - Reimbursement Requests.

Unless otherwise noted within this guidance, the ELCs must follow OEL Program Guidance 240.01 – Cash Management to manage funds for this project on an on-going basis.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

Issuance of this guidance represents approval by OEL management of the indicated guidance and related administrative forms. This program guidance is effective as of the most recent date listed below. These procedures will be in effect as of the date of this guidance. Original October 16, 2017. Updated July 1, 2018.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- Attachment 1 – ELPPF Provider Application Guide
- Attachment 2 – ELPPF Provider Selection and Budget Guide
- Attachment 3 – ELPPF Contract Guide
- Attachment 4 – ELPPF Notifications and Dates

Please direct questions and comments to Office of Early Learning at (866) 357-3239 or [performancefunding@oel.myflorida.com](mailto:performancefunding@oel.myflorida.com).